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# JRNL 270.01: Introduction to Reporting

Jule A. Banville

*University of Montana - Missoula*, [jule.banville@umontana.edu](mailto:jule.banville@umontana.edu)

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# JRNL 270

## Intro to Reporting

SPRING 2014

Section 1, TT 9:40-11

DAH 009

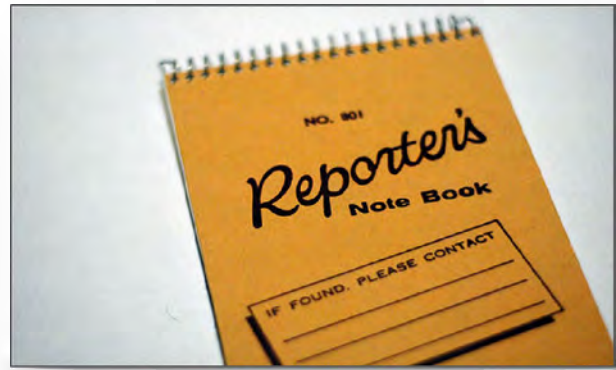
Instructor: Jule Banville

[jule.banville@umontana.edu](mailto:jule.banville@umontana.edu)

Phone: 243-2237

Don Anderson Hall 427

Office Hours: Friday 9-noon or by appointment



### INTRODUCTION

This will be, for most of you, a tough class. It's designed for you to understand the basics of what it takes to be a reporter in a field where only the tough succeed. It can often be a fun class, too, where a lot of your learning comes from getting out there and talking to people you'd likely never meet and telling their stories. I will push you. And I will rejoice in your accomplishments and your experiences and your growth. This course is fundamental to all aspects of being a journalist. I'll require a lot from you and, if you give this class the time and attention it deserves, you'll surprise yourself by how much you've learned by the end of the semester.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

Successful JRNL 270 students will:

- Develop sound news judgment.
- Find proper sources and conduct interviews.
- Understand which facts are necessary and how to gather them.
- Learn to write basic news stories with accuracy, clarity, logic and precision.
- Understand and employ story formats for both print/online and broadcast.
- Learn the basics of gathering and editing audio.
- Understand basic legal and ethical principles of journalism.

### CLASS MEETINGS

We'll meet Tuesdays and Thursdays at 9:40 a.m. **BE ON TIME.** Tardiness drives me up a tree and is a factor when I file your final grades. Reporters don't show up for the mayor's press conference five minutes late, ask what they missed or just blow it off. This class teaches professional skills and I consider it my job to prepare you by treating you like an adult professional. Please show me the same respect by coming to class and coming on time. We will occasionally meet to cover a news event outside of class. You'll have plenty of notice and will be prepped for that.

### READINGS

The required text for this class is "News Writing and Reporting" by Chip Scanlan and Richard Craig. It's available at the bookstore. You will be quizzed.

## **HOMEWORK and ASSIGNMENTS**

You can expect about 10 assignments and will produce more ambitious articles/scripts as the course progresses.

**Note:** Writing and reading assignments will be discussed in class and posted on the UM Online/Moodle site for this class. It's your responsibility to check it. I will not track you down to tell you what you missed and what assignment is owed. You can find the site by logging in with your NetID here: <http://umonline.umd.edu/>

Emails from me will be sent via UM Online/Moodle to your university address. Failure to check your university email will not be an accepted excuse for missing information.

## **GRADES**

Writing and reporting assignments	70 percent
Quizzes	10 percent
Participation and Attendance	20 percent

Writing and radio assignments will be evaluated according to how well you incorporate what we learn in class, what you learn in readings and what your skills brings to a story. I'll be looking for accuracy, news judgment, clarity, completeness and fairness. I'll also be looking for correct spelling, grammar and, within reason, rules of journalistic style. Let me say this again another way: SPELLING AND GRAMMAR COUNT. Do yourself a favor and check yours before you turn in anything to me. Use the grammar and spell checks in Word. Have a grammar nerd friend read it over first.

A misspelled name is the No. 1 no-no of journalism. Misspelled names and other obvious factual mistakes will result in an automatic F (50 percent) for that assignment. At the semester's end, I may substitute a better grade for that assignment, but only if you've avoided repeating such mistakes on subsequent assignments.

Individual grades will reflect a professional standard. The closer an assignment is to being publishable/airable, the better the grade.

Missed deadlines are not an option in this class or in journalism. Unless you make prior arrangements with me, an assignment submitted after the deadline will earn no higher than a 50.

You can avoid problems in this course by treating it like a job. **Meet your deadlines. Get the instructor's permission in advance for any necessary absence. Be thoughtful and engaged.**

Grades will be based on a scale of 100 percent and will use the University of Montana's plus/minus system. Letter grades will not be used in this course, although the final grade (per requirement) will be given as a letter grade. Please note: A 70/C- is the minimum passing grade for JRNL classes. You will not receive credit toward the requirements of a Journalism degree if you earn lower than a 70/C- in this class.

The equivalents are as follows:



90 - 100 percent: A  
80 - 89 percent: B  
70 - 79 percent: C  
60 - 69 percent: D  
50 - 59 percent: F

UM's plus/minus system also makes the following distinctions:

A+: 97-100  
A: 93-96  
A-: 90-92  
B+: 87-89  
B: 83-86  
B-: 80-82  
C+: 77-79  
C: 73-76  
C-: 70-72  
D+: 67-69  
D: 63-66  
D-: 60-62  
F: 59 or lower

### **PARTICIPATION**

Pre-registered students who fail to attend the first meeting of the class may be dropped. You are expected to attend every class. You can't succeed if you miss critique sessions, lectures and labs. The only excused absence is one emailed to me and accepted by me at least one hour before class. Some classes will include graded quizzes and assignments. These cannot be made up unless arranged with me *in advance*.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

I expect your honesty in presenting your own work for this course. Academic misconduct at The University of Montana is subject to an academic penalty ranging from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university. Students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct

Code. <http://www.umt.edu/SA/VPSSA/index.cfm/page/1321>

### **PLAGIARISM**

As defined by "The University of Montana Student Conduct Code" plagiarism is: "Representing another person's original words, ideas, data, notes or other materials as one's own." This is strictly prohibited in this class and any case of plagiarism in this course will be subject to the penalties outlined in the student code of conduct. In addition, fictions (made-up facts, made-up people) presented as journalism are grounds for immediate failure.

### **DOUBLE-DIPPING**

You may not submit for this course any assignment that has previously, or will be concurrently, submitted for another class, unless you receive prior approval from the

professor for this course. To do so without permission will result in an F for the assignment and could result in an F for the course. However, you can and are encouraged to publish any work you do for this class.

### **EQUIPMENT**

Later in the semester, small teams of students will receive audio recording equipment. You will manage sharing the gear among your teammates.

### **\*You are financially responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged equipment.**

Be careful with all equipment you use. Don't leave any equipment in your car or anywhere it may be stolen. Do not lose your temper and take it out on the equipment. Problems will happen, whether you're at the network level or in college. Everything breaks down eventually. Batteries quit and computers don't always work. Be patient and learn to solve problems.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

This course is accessible to and usable by otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. Disability Services for Students will assist the instructor and student in the accommodation process. For more information, visit the Disability Services website at [www.umd.edu/dss/](http://www.umd.edu/dss/).

### **SCHEDULE (Subject to change)**

WEEK	TOPICS
Week 1:	What is news?/Elements of the story/The process approach
Week 2:	Interviewing
Week 3:	Sourcing/news vs. "human interest"/shapes of stories
Week 4:	Using quotes and supporting facts/avoiding clichés
Week 5:	Writing kickass kickers
Week 6:	Deadline writing
Week 7:	Features/story ideas/pitching
Week 8:	Review and rehash basics of print news
Week 9:	Intro to radio/diversity
Week 10:	Writing scripts/sound bites
Week 11:	Nat/Ambient Sound
Week 12:	Radio features
Week 13:	Radio features cont.
Week 14:	Radio rehash/deadline drills
Week 15:	Wrapping it up/sending you out into the world